

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8008

As Passed Senate, February 16, 2007

Brief Description: Asking that the federal government provide veterans' benefits owed to Filipino veterans.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Rockefeller, Berkey, Weinstein, Kauffman, Marr, Oemig, Kline, Hobbs, Murray, Poulsen, Rasmussen, Kastama, Shin, Franklin, Hatfield, Sheldon, Kohl-Welles, Jacobsen, Fraser, Pridemore and Kilmer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/05/07, 2/05/07 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/16/07, 41-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Kline, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7784)

Background: During World War II, 200,000 to 300,000 Filipinos were conscripted by President Roosevelt to serve in the United States military. The First Supplemental Surplus Appropriation Rescission Act, passed in 1946, declared that Philippine soldiers who served the United States during World War II could not be deemed veterans for the purpose of most United States veterans benefits. As a result, many Philippine veterans of World War II are statutorily ineligible for United States veterans benefits, except for certain service-connected disability and death benefits.

Summary of Bill: The Senate and House of Representatives of the state of Washington petition the President and Congress of the United States to amend the Rescission Act of 1946 to restore to Filipino veterans full United States veteran status with military benefits. The Memorial also petitions the President and Congress to give priority in the issuance of immigrant visas to the descendants of Filipino World War II veterans.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Philippines was U.S. territory during World War II, and Filipino soldiers fought and died alongside American soldiers during the war. After the war, the Philippines gained its independence, and its veterans were excluded from U.S. veteran status. There are about 8,000 such veterans in the country, and 100 in Washington State. The veterans themselves were granted U.S. citizenship, but their children were not. There are less and less of these veterans, and they are growing old and dying here without their families. It is very sad to witness. These veterans were promised long ago that their children would be able to join them in this country, and they are still waiting. They often die waiting.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Prentice, prime sponsor; Ellen M. Abellera, Executive Director, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs; Amador Montero, Filipino War Veterans of Washington; Conrado Rigor, International Drop-In Center; Greg Garcia, Filipino War Veterans of Washington; John Lee, Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.